

Recommendation: Activate a Blue Ribbon Study Commission to look at education needs for the 21st century to develop a seamless education system.

North Carolina can be proud of the progress it has made in improving and supporting the public schools and higher education. But more must be done to provide students and adults with 21st century skills because other states are stepping up their efforts to increase educational opportunities.

To keep pace with the changes brought on not only by growing enrollment, changes in demographics, the global economy and the knowledge revolution, all of the higher education systems will have to plan differently about how they prepare for the future.

A Blue Ribbon Study Commission should be established and charged with looking at how North Carolina prepares its citizens for continuous learning opportunities throughout their lives. (Options other than a special commission – work could be done by the North Carolina Education Cabinet, North Carolina School Improvement Plan or Governor Easley's Education First Task Force.) Questions the group must answer:

- Do we have an education system from pre-K through 14-16 years of education that is preparing people with 21st century skills?
- Current education models are based on agrarian and industrial societies where the memorization of facts and repetition of skills were important. Do these models help students with the analytical, communication and team skills needed in the 21st century?
- The Education Cabinet has promoted dialogue among the various education institutions in the state but has it developed active, collaborative partnerships that provide a seamless education system?
- Are North Carolina policymakers prepared to provide the resources needed for a 21st century system and are measures in place to hold the education institutions accountable for providing 21st century skills?

The impact of technology and globalization are having an impact on education planning. "Education in the 21st century will change significantly in terms of delivery systems, teaching and learning methodologies, and the nature and number of educational providers. Examples include change from a faculty-centered to a learner-centered environment, greater reliance on interactive and collaborative learning, greater focus on learning outcomes and competencies, and delivery of education 'anytime, anywhere'."³¹¹

Is North Carolina prepared to deliver education "anytime, anywhere" to provide individuals with economic opportunity and to keep the state economically competitive?